

COVID-19: What Do We Know?

As we enter month eight of COVID-19 being a consistent presence in our daily lives, it's important to take a moment and refresh our knowledge of the facts surrounding the virus. It's through knowledge and repetition, after all, that we can continue to affect change in attitudes and stave off fatigue and complacency.

WHAT WE KNOW:

- COVID-19 is an infectious and highly contagious disease. It spreads through droplets emitted when someone infected with the virus coughs, sneezes, speaks, sings, whistles or exhales. We also know that the virus can travel and be transmitted through aerosols, meaning it has the propensity to travel beyond two metre distances.
- The virus spreads through the air in droplets and aerosols where the droplets find their way into the body either by being inhaled or by touching infected surfaces and transporting the virus to the body when that individual touches their eyes, nose or mouth. It is also understood that airborne transmission of the virus can create infection through the eyes and indirectly from infected clothes where it can be subsequently transferred to the as described above.
- Physical distancing, together with facial mask coverage, remain among the most effective mitigation tactics available. Keep at least two metres away from others, avoiding crowded places, physical contact and non-essential trips out of your home. Outdoor spaces are better than indoor spaces for air quality and further reduce likelihood of transmission.

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President's Perspective: Mental Health

As we continue to live in a world where COVID-19 has become a predominant influence, for many it is beginning to feel like a marathon as new evidence is emerging that points to the toll it's taking on us all.

An estimated three million Canadians lost their jobs between the months of March and June. According to Statistics Canada, using data collected from 17 police forces across Canada, this time frame also saw an increase in calls to police services for the following reasons:

- Domestic disturbances (up 12 per cent)
- Mental health crises (up 11 per cent)
- Child welfare checks (up 19 per cent)

It's not all bad news, though. At the same time as we're seeing an increase in these serious issues, we're also seeing a decrease in the following reports to police:

- Assault (down 12 per cent)
- Sexual assaults (down 25 per cent)
- Robbery (down 20 per cent)
- Car theft (down 15 per cent)
- Drunk driving (down 14 per cent)

The impact of significant life changes including job changes together with social restrictions

are having an impact. While some of these statistics are encouraging we can not overlook the toll these changes are having on mental health. The long term effect of COVID-19 has yet to be seen but we do know at this point that mental health could use some attention right now.

For years people have talked about the benefits of work-life balance and I feel that as a society we have been headed in that direction. COVID-19 has in many ways acted as a catalyst in that regard and has helped us fast forward remote working capabilities and home office configuration which at some point may help with work life balance. So, not all bad... perhaps just thrust upon us a little too quick which also can add a great deal of anxiety.

Maintaining perspective is important in juggling mental health. It's good to understand where we have been, where we are and importantly where we are going. The weight of previous and current experiences can be overwhelming but knowing that the things we do today can have a positive effect on our near- and long-term mental health can add perspective that sometimes goes missing. It's good to remember that this new normal could have permanent change associated with it and

strategies to help along the way will be more important than ever.

Take some time for self-care. It's essential. If you're making time to look after your own mental health, you can build resilience for yourself and for those who may need to lean on you.

Be kind to yourself. Priorities and managing priorities are important but it is also easy to feel as though you are falling short of expectations, especially your own. There are only so many hours in a day so try to allocate them in advance. Things are different now and we are balancing multiple priorities so the output may also be different. Stay connected with people and involve people in your work. Most of all don't forget to make time for yourself. We all need work life balance that we all need to be at our best.

Media consumption, especially, is a critical part of managing your mental state during this time. Knowledge and understanding helps us to make sense of things. As people we tend to want to fill information voids and it is often best to do that with reliable information. Stay informed to the degree that you can justify and feel comfortable with and watch for alarmist delivery and news fatigue. Both

can take us to the wrong place. News and information surrounds us — some sources more credible than others — and it's incumbent on you to consume news you trust, but also to take a break if you feel panic seeping in from information overload. Remember also to watch what you put into your body. Alcohol use is on the rise in Canada, with the most-cited reasons according to a study by the Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction being a lack of regular schedule, stress and boredom. Be very cautious — substance abuse can lead to addiction and a myriad of health issues. Plan your available hours in advance and consider healthier alternative coping methods including exercise, meditation, follow an interest or spend time on the things you enjoy.

As we learn to cope with this new way of life, it's important to remember that making time for ourselves is of paramount importance. Seek out help if you need it and remember — we're in this together.

Be Safe and be kind!



Gareth Jones
President and CEO



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- Facial coverings can help slow the spread, but are not an alternative to physical distancing and are at their most effective when used in conjunction with keeping distance.
- It is still important to regularly wash your hands with soap and hot water. The more you wash your hands, the less likely you are to accidentally have it enter your body after touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Disinfecting surfaces is also widely used to help manage the spread and remains a good practice for all to follow when practicable.

We're still learning more about the virus as additional research is conducted. As the winter approaches and many workers are returning to their offices, research that is of special interest includes the potential spread of COVID-19 via Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems.

In the meantime, we all need to remain vigilant and do our part in limiting the spread of the coronavirus. This is a disease that can spread rapidly and asymptotically, meaning that risks you may feel comfortable taking have the potential of affecting others around you before you even realize it.

Keep social groups to a minimum. Different provinces across the country have different regulations when it comes to the amount of people in your personal bubble, but the fewer people you see, the less risk you run. Consider technological alternatives to in-person meetups, which may include video conferencing tools like FaceTime, Skype or Zoom.

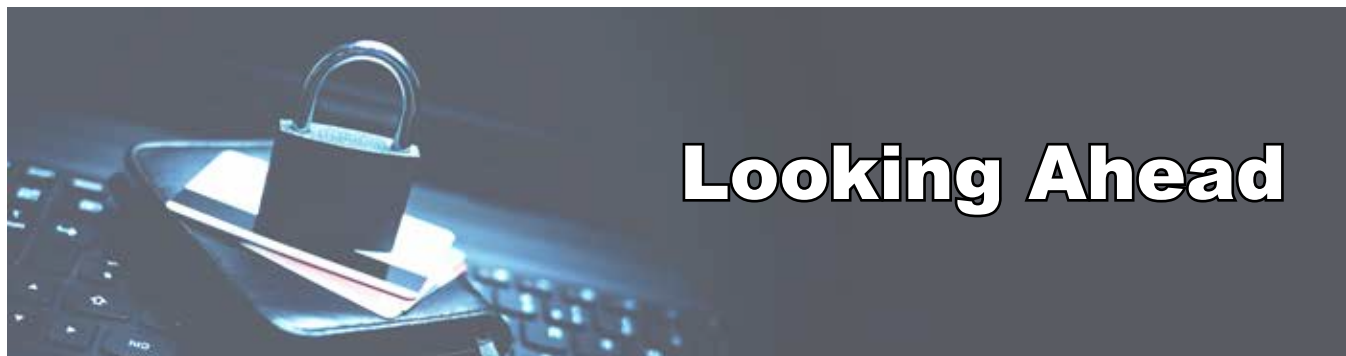
Take no risks if you feel ill. Common symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, dry cough and excessive fatigue. Some people have also reported sore throats, aches and pains, headaches and a loss of taste or smell.

If in doubt, contact your local health authority for advice and information on testing. Once a case is confirmed, it makes it easier to track down contacts and limit community spread. Once you've been tested, immediately return home and self-isolate.

We're all collectively exhausted from the constant anxiety and uncertainty. It's worth remembering, though, that the virus doesn't especially care about our exhaustion. That's why we need to remain vigilant at all times.

COVID-19 Online Training

Did you know the Canada Safety Council offers a suite of online training courses dealing with an assortment of topics relating to COVID-19? It's true! Visit <https://canadasafetycouncil.org/covid-19> for more info.



Looking Ahead

The Canada Safety Council is ramping up for a busy season as summer has faded into fall and will, soon enough, cede way to winter.

The fall months have historically been among the most active ones for us here, as five of our eight national campaigns fall during this window. Here's what we've got in store for each:

National School Safety Week (October 17-23):

The education system as a whole has been forced to adapt to a whole new method of delivery, with many educational institutions moving education online. This, of course, comes with a unique set of problems when it comes to keeping children and their information safe online. We'll be providing tips and tricks for parents to ensure that safety is top of mind when their child is learning remotely.

National Community Safety and Crime Prevention Month (November):

Throughout the pandemic, we've heard concerns about how Canadians are leaning on vices to help them cope with an uncertain future. Our messaging surrounding this campaign will focus primarily on three of these vices: alcohol, drugs and gambling. We'll provide advice on safe use and alternatives.

National Senior Safety Week (November 6-12):

A very worrying trend is becoming more clear as our population base in Canada grows older:

elder abuse is a significant problem, both in assisted retirement homes and in private homes. We will be using this campaign to shed a light on some of the more prevalent issues.

National Home Fire Safety Week (November 24-30):

The holiday season is a peak time for home cooking fires, with Christmas Day and Christmas Eve being two of the peak kitchen fire days of the year. While we don't know what society may look like in December, we do know that, where possible, families will be holding smaller events where they will still be cooking for guests. This makes National Home Fire Safety Week an important time to remind Canadians of some basic fire safety tips around the kitchen.

National Safe Driving Week (December 1-7):

We're happy to welcome back the Insurance Brokers Association of Canada as sponsors for this campaign! As outlined in our joint 2019 campaign, distracted driving is a dangerous habit that can be costly — to your wallet because of insurance premiums, if you're lucky, and to the lives of you and others if not. This year, our focus turns to the fact that distraction includes anything that takes your attention off the road, specifically focusing in on the impacts of eating behind the wheel.

If there's a topic you'd like us to address, let us know at media@safety-council.org. We read every recommendation we receive and are always eager to hear your thoughts!

Firefighters Share Top Fire Prevention Tips

(NC) With most of us spending more time at home, it's more critical than ever to take the necessary steps to help ensure your family is prepared in the event of an emergency. Enhance your preparedness by following the fire service professionals' top safety tips.

Alarm your home. The risk of dying in a fire is cut in half in homes with working smoke alarms, according to the National Fire Protection Association.



“The best defense against a home emergency is prevention,” says Cynthia Ross Tustin, fire chief and president of the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs (OAFC). “Check to ensure you have working smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.”

Even if you have alarms in your home, you may not be sufficiently protected if you don't have enough devices. Expert guidelines recommend installing smoke and CO alarms on every level of the home, in every bedroom and outside each sleeping area.

Test, maintain and replace alarms. According to the Canadian National Fire Information Database, 80 per cent of fire deaths occur in homes without working smoke alarms, often due to missing alarm batteries or expired alarms.

“Alarms don't last forever and must be replaced at least every 10 years,” says Troy

Mutch, national president of the Canadian Volunteer Fire Services Association (CVFSA). “If you can't remember the last time you installed an alarm, chances are, it's time to replace it.”

Test and dust your alarms regularly and change the batteries every six months. To eliminate battery replacements and late-night chirps, install 10-year battery smoke alarms from First Alert.

Keep a fire extinguisher on hand. Beyond alarms, having fire extinguishers – and knowing how to use them – is an important part of any

home safety plan. Keep them in convenient locations in the kitchen and garage and on every level of the home. If a fire is large and cannot be controlled, it's important to exit your home immediately to help ensure a safe escape.

Establish an emergency escape plan. When designing your plan, identify two exits out of each room, including windows and doors, and set a dedicated meeting spot outside. Once outside, stay there and call 911.

“In the event that you need to evacuate your home, every second counts,” says Mutch. “We recommend practicing your escape plan with the entire family at least twice a year.”

Find more home fire safety tips at firstalert.ca.

Elmer the Safety Elephant

Elmer the Safety Elephant is hard at work delivering well-researched and practical information to schoolchildren about COVID-19! Do you remember Elmer? Check out the following link for a refresher.

<https://canadasafetycouncil.org/elmer-the-safety-elephant>

Staying Active at Any Age

(NC) Exercise and physical activity are essential to our physical and mental health at every age and stage of life. And while many of us are experiencing a renewed interest in moving our bodies after staying home and social distancing, it's doubly important if you have arthritis.

“When it hurts to move, it seems natural not to move. But the truth is that moderate exercise actually improves your joint function and flexibility, and this leads to less pain,” explains Trish Barbato, president and CEO of the Arthritis Society.

If regular fitness has fallen off your to-do list or you're having a hard time starting, consider these low- to no-impact activities to get you moving again – whether you have arthritis or not.

Walking. Walking puts less strain on your joints and is much safer than running. It's also inexpensive and easy to do anywhere. All you need is a good pair of walking shoes with flexible soles and

adequate arch support.

Water exercise. Water activities are easy on muscles, joints and bones. Start an exercise routine by walking waist-deep in the pool, or by practicing floating on your back. Once you are comfortable in the water, try swimming laps. And when your community centre starts classes again, check for programs designed specifically for people with arthritis.

Yoga. Yoga typically combines physical postures, breathing techniques and meditation to strengthen your muscles, increase your flexibility and help you relax. Look for virtual classes designed for people with arthritis to ensure the exercise is not too strenuous for you.

Cycling. Cycling strengthens your muscles and gives your heart and lungs a good workout. Make sure you start slowly and use the least amount of resistance if you have knee problems.

Find more information at arthritis.ca.



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